

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 209033 TOSEC 100499

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UNCLAS STATE 209033 TOSEC 100499

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TAGS: SOPN (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON STAR EDITORIAL:"CLOSED COVENANT FOR
THE MIDEAST?",WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

FOR AMBASSADOR ANDERSON FROM S/PRS (FUNSETH)
NO. 56

FOLLOWING IS COMPLETE TEXT OF WASH STAR EDITORIAL ENTITLED:
"CLOSED COVENANT FOR THE MIDEAST?"

BEGIN TEXT:

THE UNITED STATES BOWED IN AS A BROKER OF THE DESTINIES OF
OTHER NATIONS SOME 60 YEARS AGO, WHEN PRESIDENT WILSON
ASSAILED THE SECRET ACCORDS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND
PROMISED 'OPEN COVENANTS OPENLY ARRIVED AT' IN THEIR STEAD.

THE WILSONIAN TERM, WHICH EVEN ITS AUTHOR SOON FOUND TOO
RESTRICTIVE TO BE PRACTICAL, CAN HARDLY BE APPLIED TO THE
INTERIM PEACE AGREEMENT DR. KISSINGER IS BRINGENG BACK FROM
THE MIDDLE EAST.

WHAT IS PUBLICLY KNOWN OF THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ACCORD, IN
WHICH ISRAEL HAS AGREED TO EXCHANGE VITAL STRATEGIC POSITION
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PAGE 02 STATE 209033 TOSEC 100499

IN SINAI FOR AN EGYPTIAN DISAVOWAL OF FORCE AND THE
THREAT OF FORCE, IS WELCOME. CONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF
WHAT IT ACHIEVES ALONE, THE BOLD PRINT OF THE AGREEMENT
COMES WITHIN HAILING DISTANCE OF BEING QUITE AS IMPORTANT

AS PRESIDENT FORD CLAIMS. AND THAT IS SAYING MUCH.

BUT THE PROCEDURE IN WHICH THE ACCORD IS APPARENTLY TO BE PRESENTED FOR CONGRESSIONAL INSPECTION, AND SOME OF THE AS YET UNEXPLAINED AND UNDISCLOSED FINE PRINT, MUST GIVE PAUSE TO CONGRESS AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC. WE SEEM, INDEED, TO BE BUILDING UP TO ANOTHER OF THOSE DIPLOMATIC SQUEEZE PLAYS, REMINISCENT IN SOME WAYS OF THE GULF OF TONKIN AFFAIR, IN WHICH CONGRESS WILL BE CONFRONTED WITH A FAIT ACCOMPLI AND ASKED TO TRUST THE JUDGMENT OF THOSE WHO KNOW, OR CLAIM TO KNOW, MORE THAN CONGRESS DOES. PERHAPS THE BASIS OF TRUST WILL BE ASSERTED MORE MODESTLY THAN IN THE PAST, BUT NO DOUBT WITH THE INSINUATION THAT THOSE WHO PRESUME TO QUIBBLE OVER THE AGREEMENT MUST ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY FUTURE BREAKDOWN OF THE FRAGILE CEASE-FIRE.

ONE OF THE PRICES DEMANDED FOR THE AGREEMENT, AS WE ALREADY KNOW, IS AN UNPRECEDENTED INVOLVEMENT OF AMERICAN PERSONNEL IN THE MONITORING OF THE WITHDRAWAL LINES. AMERICAN 'TECHNICIANS', VOLUNTEERS EQUIPPED ONLY WITH SIDEARMS, WILL BE MANNING ELECTRONIC SENSORS AT THREE STATIONS IN THE SINAI MOUNTAIN PASSES AND SUPERVISING EGYPTIAN AND ISRAEL PERSONNEL AT ANOTHER. AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT - AN AFTER-THOUGHT PROMPTED BY THE REALIZATION THAT THIS ARRANGEMENT GIVES QUEASY FEELINGS TO SOME MEMBERS OF CONGRESS - TERMS FOR THEIR WITHDRAWAL IN CERTAIN EMERGENCIES HAVE BEEN ADOPTED.

YET THE KEY QUESTION, AS WE SUGGESTED THE OTHER DAY, IS WHETHER THE AMERICAN TECHNICIANS WILL BE HOSTAGES TO THE UNPREDICTABLE FORTUNES OF THE AGREEMENT, AS WELL AS SENTINELS. THAT THEY MAY HAVE A DOUBLE ROLE IN HINTED, AT LEAST, IN THE ISRAELI DECLARATION THAT UNLESS CONGRESS AGREES TO THE AMERICAN PRESENCE ISRAEL WILL NOT GO ALONG WITH THE ACCORD.

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PAGE 03 STATE 209033 TOSEC 100499

IN ANY CASE, QUESTIONS ABOUT THE AMERICAN PRESENCE SHOULD BE SCRUPULOUSLY EXPLORED ON CAPITOL HILL. CONGRESS, HAVING FRESH MEMORY OF A NUMBER OF CRASH LANDINGS, WILL WANT TO HAVE A FIRM HAND ON THE THROTTLE AT THIS TAKEOFF.

THE OTHER, BROADER QUESTION ABOUT THE AGREEMENT IS JUST WHAT CONFIDENTIAL UNDERTAKINGS THE UNITED STATES IS

MAKING TO ISRAEL, AND INDEED TO EGYPT, TO ESTABLISH ITS GOOD FAITH AS HONEST BROKER.

SEVERAL INTRIGUING PARAGRAPHS FROM A REPORT IN TUESDAY'S BALTIMORE SUN DEFINE THE PROBLEM:

' A SENIOR OFFICIAL IN THE KISSINGER PARTY ... PROMISED

YESTERDAY THAT CONGRESS WILL BE GIVEN A FULL EXPLANATION
OF THE AMERICAN ROLE AND THAT NO ASPECT WILL BE KEPT
SECRET.

' BUT AT THE SAME TIME, THE OFFICIAL DECLARED THAT
MOST OF THE UNITED STATES' POLITICAL COMMITMENTS TO ISRAEL
WILL NOT BE DISCUSSED SINCE THEY ARE CONSIDERED PART OF
NORMALLY SECRET DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES (EMPHASIS OURS).
(SINCE ... EXCHANGES-ITALICIZED IN ARTICLE)

' THESE COMMITMENTS ARE SAID BY ISRAELI SOURCES TO
INCLUDE PLEDGES TO PROTECT ISRAEL IN THE EVENT OF SOVIET
MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

IF THIS 'SENIOR OFFICIAL'S ' REMARKS ARE ACCURATELY
REPORTED, ONE IS BOUND TO WONDER WHETHER CONGRESS WILL
OR SHOULD ACCEPT HIS CASUAL DEFINITION OF 'NORMAL ...
DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES.' IT REQUIRES NO SPECIAL UNDER-
STANDING OF ENGLISH TO SEE THAT THERE COULD BE A GREAT
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TRANSCRIPT OF A CONFIDENTIAL
DISCUSSION OF A PUBLIC AGREEMENT AND A PRIVATE ENTENTE
THAT GREATLY ENLARGES THE SCOPE OF THAT AGREEMENT IN SECRET
WAYS. THE DIFFERENCE, WHICH IS CONCEIVABLY HUGE INDEED,
CAN BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MERE CHAFF OF DIPLOMATIC
HISTORY AND A FAR-REACHING "COMMITMENT" OF WHICH WE
LEARN ONLY WHEN IT IS FAR BEYOND THE STAGE OF EASY RE-
VOCATION.
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PAGE 04 STATE 209033 TOSEC 100499

THE RISK OF ANY SECRET UNDERTAKING, WHATEVER ITS MERITS,
IS CLEAR ENOUGH: WHEN CONGRESS AND THE PUBLIC ARE SPARED
THE TASK OF UNDERSTANDING AND PUBLICLY ASSENTING TO A
DIPLOMATIC AGREEMENT, IT IS FAR MORE LIKELY TO BOUNCE
LIKE A BAD CHECK WHEN THE TIME TO CASH IT ARRIVES. WE
HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING WHETHER THE 'NORMAL DIPLOMATIC'
EXCHANGES WHICH ARE TO BE KEPT SECRET UNDER PRESENT
PLANS ARE TRIVIAL OR IMPORTANT; NOR DO WE KNOW WHETHER OR
NOT, SIGHT UNSEEN, THEY COMMIT THE UNITED STATES TO A
FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION THAT CONGRESS AND THE PUBLIC
WILL FIND PALATABLE. WE NEED TO KNOW; AND WE NEED TO
KNOW BEFORE ANOTHER EMBARRASSING COLLAPSE OF U.S.
DIPLOMATIC CREDIT AGAIN UNDERSCORES THE FOLLY OF CLOSED
COVENANTS SECRETLY ARRIVED AT. END TEXT

ROBINSON

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